

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, SW, BE
SUBJECT: HALF-HEARTED SWEDISH SUPPORT FOR VOLVO STRIKE IN BELGIUM

1. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY SUFFERED A BLOW, AT LEAST IN THE EYES OF SOME, WHEN THE SWEDISH METAL WORKERS' UNION (MTEALL) FIRST WAITED FOR A COURT DECISION AND THEN GAVE SEVEN DAYS' STRIKE NOTICE BEFORE HEEDING AN INTERNATIONAL METAL WORKERS FEDERATION (IMF) CALL TO REFUSE TO ACCEPT WORK DIVERTED FROM A STRUCK VOLVO PLANT IN BELGIUM. MEANWHILE THE BELGIAN STRIKE COLLAPSED ON APRIL 20 BUT THE CONTROVERSY IN SWEDEN OVER THE CORRECTNESS OF THE METALL DECISION GOES ON.

2. METALL ORIGINALLY HEADED THE IMF CALL FOR SUPPORT FOR THE BELGIAN WORKERS BUT SUSPENDED ITS ACTION WHEN VOLVO WENT TO COURT CLAIMING THAT METALL WAS IN VIOLATION OF THE NO-STRIKE PROVISION OF THE CONTRACT. METALL'S LAWYERS SUCCESSFULLY ARGUED THAT NO CONTRACT VIOLATION

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WAS INVOLVED SINCE THE NEW CO-DETERMINATION LAW WHICH WENT INTO EFFECT JANUARY 1, 1977 CLEARLY AUTHORIZED METALL TO REFUSE TO ACCEPT WORK DIRECTED FROM A STRUCK FACTORY IN ANOTHER COUNTRY. METALL'S LEADERSHIP PROFESSED PLEASURE WITH THE COURT DECISION STATING THAT THE UNION'S POSITION HAD BEEN VINDICATED.

3. MANY OF THE MORE INTERNATIONAL AND RADICALLY MINDED DISAGREED POINTING OUT THAT THE PRACTICAL RESULT OF THE LEGAL ACTION WAS THAT THE BELGIANS LOST THE STRIKE WHILE METALL WAS IN THE COURT. THEY INSISTED THAT INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY DEMANDED IMMEDIATE ACTION WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ANY COURT AND IF THE UNION WAS LATER FINED SO BE IT.

4. COMMENT: THIS INCIDENT IS OF INTEREST FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST IT UNDERLINES THE CONSERVATIVISM AND BASICALLY DOMESTIC ORIENTATION OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF SWEDEN'S MOST IMPORTANT UNION. SECONDLY IT IS THE BEGINNING OF WHAT PROMISES TO BE A LONG JUDICIAL HISTORY OF EXACTLY WHAT CO-DETERMINATION IMPLIES WHEN IT IS APPLIED TO GREAT TRANS-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS WITH TENS OF THOUSANDS OF WORKERS IN MANY LANDS.
KENNEDY-MINOTT

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